



Report from SAIOH's President and Council Members

SAIOH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2017

Without a doubt, the highlight of the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) year was the SAIOH Conference which was held from 25 to 27 October 2017 at Misty Hills Country Hotel and Conference Venue, nestled in the foothills of the Swartkop Mountains in the Cradle of Humankind, on the threshold of the beautiful Kromdraai Valley in Muldersdrift.

The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, one of eight in the country, boasts a rich fossil history, thanks to the rare preservation conditions of the area's dolomitic limestone ridges. Although our hominin ancestors roamed throughout the African continent, the preservation of their remains in the various caves of the Cradle of Humankind is particularly striking. The fossil sites here have produced more hominin fossils than any other sites in the world (around 40%). There are 15 fossil sites in the core area, which is also home to a diversity of birds, animals and plants, some of which are rare or endangered.

THE SCIENTIFIC PROGRAMME

The Conference was hosted by the SAIOH Gauteng branch and was attended by approximately 150 delegates, including presenters, exhibitors and SAIOH support staff. The Conference was opened by the SAIOH President, Kenneth Hlungwane, and the Chair of the SAIOH Gauteng branch, Martin Schoonhoven.

The scientific programme (26-27 October 2017) comprised rich and varied offerings:

- Five keynote addresses (three international and two regional/national);
- Six presentations from SAIOH stakeholder and sister organisations in a special session dedicated to their respective opinions and views on challenges in occupational hygiene/health (Departments of Labour and Mineral Resources, Gauteng Health Department, The South African Society of Occupational Medicine (SASOM), the South African Society of Occupational Health Nursing Practitioners (SASOHN), and the Occupational Hygiene Approved Inspection Authority (OH-AIA Association);
- A special interactive session dedicated to the SAIOH certification process (presented by three members of the SAIOH Professional Certification Committee (PCC) – Deon Jansen van Vuuren, Sean Chester and Julie Hills); and
- Twenty papers (oral and poster presentations) spanning various sub-themes, viz. partnerships and collaborations in occupational hygiene; research and innovation; management and quality systems; occupational hygiene stressors; and an opinion piece on unethical behaviour and practices in the field of occupational hygiene.

Special mention is made here of two oral papers and one poster presentation delivered by postgraduate students. Brother and sister duo, Stefan Linde (oral paper) and Karlien Linde (poster), both from North-West University, presented 'Contribution of respiratory and dermal exposure routes to platinum body burden' and 'The exposure of Limpopo

farm workers to solar ultraviolet radiation during summer', respectively; and Goitseman Keretsetse from the Wits School of Public Health (SoPH), presented an oral paper titled 'Assessment of nail technicians' exposure to chemicals found in nail salon products in Gauteng, South Africa'.

In keeping with the international flavour of the Conference theme, 'Occupational Hygiene: Building Bridges beyond Borders', SAIOH invited international experts in their respective fields to deliver keynote addresses.

The first international keynote address, titled 'Decision-making in the midst of uncertainty: An occupational hygienist responding to bioterrorism, SARS and Ebola virus', was delivered by Mr Eric Esswein, a certified occupational hygienist recently retired from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, USA), with 26 years of service and holding the rank of Captain. Besides being a very knowledgeable and experienced occupational hygienist, and a recipient of multiple accolades and special awards (including Hygienist of the Year in 2004 and 2016 – American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) Rocky Mountain Section), Eric has been a first responder and technical team leader for numerous national and international disasters or outbreaks, including the World Trade Center attack in New York (9/11, in 2001); the anthrax attack on the US Capitol (2001); the SARS pandemic in Taiwan (2003); the Asian Tsunami aftermath in Thailand (2005); the US Gulf oil spill (2010); and the Ebola outbreak in Monrovia, Liberia (2015). Eric is a long-time friend of South Africa and South African occupational hygiene/health, and continues to be an honorary lecturer at the SoPH, for the Masters in Public Health (MPH) Programme. In his keynote address, Eric gave a very detailed overview of what is involved in an emergency response, and how the roles played by occupational hygienists have become more prominent and crucial in terms of protecting emergency responders and the general public in emergencies and disasters.

The second international keynote address, titled 'Workplace health and the global hygiene community', was delivered by Ms Marianne Levitsky, a certified occupational hygienist and senior associate at ECOH Management Inc., a Canadian environmental and occupational health consulting firm. Marianne is the founding President of the non-profit global organisation, Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB) which is headquartered in Toronto, Canada. Marianne was President of WHWB for the past six years, since the inception of the organisation, and has recently stepped down and taken up the position of WHWB Secretary: she is also adjunct faculty at the University of Toronto. Marianne's address illustrated very clearly that, with increasing globalisation, occupational hygienists are realising that their commitment to protecting worker health cannot stop at the borders of their respective countries, and that they are well-positioned to achieve great advances in promoting global health if they can strategise well to realise these opportunities.

Eric and Marianne represent organisations with which SAIOH has Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and collaborative agreements, viz. NIOSH, USA, and WHWB, Canada, respectively; and



both are fellows of the AIHA, with which SAIOH also has a MoU.

The third international keynote address, titled 'Exposure statistics: Pushing occupational exposure assessment into the big data era', was delivered by Prof Jérôme Lavoué from the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Public Health, University of Montreal, Canada. Jérôme is responsible for the creation of an open access Bayesian toolkit for interpreting occupational hygiene measurement data (www.expostats.ca) and is a collaborator of the Wits SoPH, working closely with the Anglo American Chair of Occupational Hygiene, Dr Derk Brouwer. Jérôme's address gave insight into how Bayesian statistics allow for the objective and transparent integration of various sources of occupational hygiene information, so as to arrive at a final statement about exposure and risk. In addition, he showed that it is critical for occupational hygiene practitioners to continue generating and sharing documented exposure data, to ensure that future exposure-predicting tools remain relevant and accurate.

The Conference also benefitted from two keynote addresses by regional and national presenters.

The regional keynote address, titled 'The Southern Africa Tuberculosis and Health Systems Project and identifying opportunities for contributions from occupational hygiene', was delivered by Mr Norman Khoza in his capacity of representative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Agency, since the invited keynote presenter, Ms Chimwemwe Chamdimba, Principal Policy Specialist at NEPAD, was unable to attend the Conference due to unforeseen operational circumstances at the Johannesburg office. Norman gave an overview of the project which has created a community of practice to support the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in tackling tuberculosis (TB) and other occupational lung diseases, with the ultimate aim of eradicating TB by 2030. The project makes use of a regional multi-sectoral response, involving ministries responsible for health, labour and mining, and targets key populations, including miners, ex-miners and their communities, health workers, and regions with high TB and HIV/AIDS burdens, cross-border areas, and transport corridors.

Mr Ryno Botha delivered the closing keynote address, titled 'A critical review of radon-associated risks in South Africa – global occupational hygiene perspectives'. Ryno is CEO and co-founder of CareTac (Pty) Ltd., and a research and development scientist and lecturer, working with a number of local and international collaborators, including universities (Stellenbosch, Western Cape), and regulatory bodies and organisations, e.g. i-Themba Laboratory for Accelerator-based Sciences; the National Nuclear Regulator; the Water Research Commission; the Australian Nuclear Technology Organisation; Global Atmospheric Watch; and the Russian Pulse Nuclear Reactor. Ryno's address gave a comprehensive perspective on the elements required to design and implement an efficient national radon policy, and an action plan for the prevention of radon-induced lung cancer, as radon has been shown to be the world's second leading cause of lung cancer. He indicated further that the occupational hygiene profession will be a key player in assisting with the identification and implementation of sustainable solutions to radon-associated challenges.

The SAIOH Annual General Meeting (AGM), held on Thursday evening, 26 October, was attended by 82 participants (SAIOH and non-SAIOH members).

On Wednesday 25 October, four half-day pre-conference Professional Development Courses (PDCs) were offered, and a record number of around 65 delegates signed up. Eric Esswein presented PDC 1 – 'Determining worker exposure risks in modern oil and gas extraction: Implications for the Karoo?'; Ryno Botha presented PDC 2 – 'Occupational radon exposure management systems and mitigation challenges – for the construction sector and beyond'; Marianne Levitsky presented PDC 3 – 'Global health, community and culture'; and Johan Snyman, lead mechanical engineer at BBE Consulting, South Africa, presented PDC 4 – 'Evaluating the effectiveness of an industrial ventilation system to ensure airborne pollutant exposure compliance'.

CONGRATULATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS – SAIOH AWARDS 2016

At the Conference's Gala Dinner and SAIOH Awards function which was held on Thursday evening, 26 October, SAIOH members were acknowledged and congratulated for their valuable contributions to the occupational hygiene profession. The following awards were bestowed:

- **Top Author – Occupational Hygiene Article for the Year 2016:**
Dr Leon Harmse (Tshwane University of Technology), who completed his PhD degree recently, for his publication: Harmse JL, Engelbrecht JC, Bekker JL. The impact of physical and ergonomic hazards on poultry abattoir processing workers: A review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2016;13(2):197 (doi:10.3390/ijerph13020197)
- **Personality of the Year 2016:** Ms Celia Keet (Occupational Hygiene Monitoring Services and Chair of the SAIOH Cape West branch)
- **Occupational Hygienist for the Year 2016:** Ms Keneilwe Matjola (Orapa Mine, Debswana, Botswana)
- **Vocational Education and Training Student for the Year 2016:** Ms Christa van Dyk (Namdeb Diamond Corporation, Namibia)
- **Tertiary Student for the Year 2016 (two awards bestowed):**
(1) Marelé Keyter (North-West University and Gijima Holdings)
(2) Yolandi Jordaan (North-West University and Gijima Holdings)
- **Top Achiever Award – 'Occupational Hygiene Assistant' Assessment 2016:** Ms Liezille Schoonbee (Tenneco Ride Control SA)
- **Top Achiever Award – 'Occupational Hygiene Technologist' Assessment 2016:**
Mr Anton Coetzer (South African Nuclear Energy Corporation)
- **Top Achiever Award – 'Occupational Hygienist' Assessment 2016:** Ms Muriel Mogane (Engen Oil and Chair of the SAIOH KwaZulu-Natal branch)

SAIOH extends hearty congratulations to all the deserving winners, and wishes them well in future endeavours as they continue developing their careers in occupational hygiene.

The Conference was officially closed on Friday afternoon, 27 October, by the SAIOH President who offered sincere thanks and appreciation to the Conference Organising Committee, the SAIOH Gauteng branch team, and other volunteers responsible for the planning, preparation, administrative, logistic and scientific aspects of the event, and for making the SAIOH Annual Conference 2016 a success. A special vote of thanks was extended to all the delegates and presenters,

without whom there would be no annual conference, as well as the session chairs who were time keepers of note. Lastly, special appreciation was given to all the invited keynote and PDC presenters who selflessly shared their vast knowledge, expertise and professional experiences, and gave their time voluntarily, thus making invaluable contributions to the SAIOH Vision of 'Ensuring healthy working environments in Africa through excellence in occupational hygiene' and the SAIOH Strategic Objective for 2017 of 'Entrenching excellence and professionalism in the occupational hygiene profession'; and really bringing to life the Conference theme of 'Occupational Hygiene: Building Bridges beyond Borders.'

Another feather in SAIOH's cap

While in the process of finalising this last submission of SAIOH News for 2017 to the Journal, SAIOH received some very good news. The SAIOH President and Council members take pleasure in announcing that Peter-John (Jakes) Jacobs – registered occupational hygienist, SAIOH Council member (co-opted), SAIOH Past President (2014), and the official SAIOH representative to the International Occupational Hygiene Association (IOHA) – has been elected, unopposed, as the President Elect of IOHA. The announcement was made at the IOHA Board meeting in Medellin, Columbia, at the end of October 2017. Jakes' term of office will be for one year, from September 2018 to September 2019. SAIOH congratulates Jakes on this prestigious appointment which also raises the profile of SAIOH internationally, and wishes him well for the action-filled year that awaits him.

Hard on the heels of SAIOH being formally awarded accreditation to act as an examiner for the 'W201 Basic principles of occupational hygiene' foundation module of the Occupational Hygiene Training Association (OHTA), the Institute looks forward to going from strength to strength, particularly in terms of forging new regional and international collaborations in occupational hygiene specifically, and occupational health more broadly, and reinforcing the existing linkages already in place. May we continue to build bridges beyond borders.

Wrapping up and winding down for the year

Signing off in my capacity of SAIOH President 2017, I would like to offer thanks for the support that I have received from SAIOH Council and members alike during my tenure. I am appreciative of the opportunity afforded to me to lead the Institute over the past year, as well as the many learning experiences that have come my way. As I bid farewell, I take pleasure in handing over the reins to the very capable Julie Hills, current SAIOH Vice President and Treasurer, and Past Chair of the PCC. I wish Julie all of the best for her SAIOH presidency during 2018. We wish all our members and their loved ones a healthy and safe end-of-year festive season with many blessings, and all of the best for the New Year 2018, with much personal and professional fulfillment.

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They came from far and wide: delegates of the SAIOH Conference take full advantage of a photo opportunity

Photograph: Riandi Terblanche



Invited international keynote and PDC presenter, Eric Esswein (NIOSH, USA) accepts his keynote speaker gift from PCC Chair, Sean Chester

Photograph: Riandi Terblanche



SAIOH Annual Awards: Leon Harmse (Tshwane University of Technology) receives the award for 'Occupational Hygiene Article for the Year 2016' from international keynote presenter, Marianne Levitsky (WHWB, Canada)

Photograph: Riandi Terblanche